

**28 *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)* by Dr. Candan Badem : Published by Brill
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Book Review by Dr. Douglas J. Austin

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I should first state that I copy-edited the five main chapters and supplied some images from *'The Illustrated London News'*. A large number of English and French (and a smaller number of Russian and Italian) texts deal with the Crimean War. It falls to few authors to fill a serious gap in the published record of their country's history but Dr. Badem (Okan University, Istanbul) has achieved this feat with this book, the 44th in a massive series on 'The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage'. He has written many articles and presented papers at various international symposia and conferences on the Crimean War. This is, I believe, the first complete English-language text on the war specifically written from the Turkish point of view. In many ways, it is an eye-opener on a cultural and governmental system very unfamiliar to Western readers. The author has conducted major in-depth studies on the Ottoman and Russian archives and has drawn freely on British and other sources. Chapter I - 'Introduction and Review of the Sources' (45 pp., 187 refs.) sets the scene and adds critical reviews of the existing texts. Chapter II - 'The Origins of the War' (52 pp., 121 refs.) begins with an overview of the Ottoman Empire and its international relations. The question of the 'Holy Places' is viewed as no more than a pretext in the escalating movement to war. Menshikov's 'mission' is seen as a blatant attempt to browbeat the Ottoman government, with military action as the clearly anticipated fall-back position. The various futile efforts to avoid conflict are described, with an overview of European and Ottoman public opinion. Chapter III - 'Battles and Diplomacy during the War' (189 pp., 523 refs.) presents much information on Ottoman activities in the Crimea. Most significantly, a wealth of detail on the Danubian, Circassian and Caucasus campaigns is set out - a very high proportion hitherto entirely unknown to Western scholars. Desperate and wholly admirable Ottoman defensive actions were all too often vitiated by endemic corruption of all kinds. The text indicates that, for the Ottomans, their campaign in the Crimea was decidedly a 'side-show' compared to their struggles in the other theatres. I particularly note the documented assertion, late in the conflict, that "the intention was to give Kars to the Russians so as to make a peace. The fall of Kars would be an opportunity for peace.". Certainly a viable proposition, which may at last explain the curious lack of urgency about attempts to relieve that important city. Chapter IV - 'Financing the War' (39 pp., 136 refs.) is a striking account of the often repellent machinations required to provide the sinews of war, involving Rothschild and others. Similar information for the Allies and Russia itself would be very interesting. The staggering fact is that the annual Ottoman military expenses increased from 40% to no less than 67% of the state budget during the war - a clear illustration of the extreme stress forced upon their government. Chapter V - 'The Impact of the War on Ottoman Social and Political Life' (76 pp., 104 refs.) offers a vivid account of the attempted and partial liberalisation of the Ottoman state and of the profound opposition, rising to civil unrest, which that inspired. The 'Conclusion' (10 pp., 4 refs.) leaves little doubt that the



Ottoman Empire effectively became a protectorate - drawn into the Concert of Europe, but not as an autonomous member. A Bibliography (20 pp.) and a short Index complete the text. I judge that Dr. Badem's book is highly educational and that it is required reading for anyone interested in the wider aspects of the conflict. It is both a duty and a pleasure to recommend it whole-heartedly. I greatly regret that, with a list price of €162.00/US\$ 230.00 (even with the 25% discount offered to CWRS members), it may prove too costly for individual purchase. We can only trust that copies will be available at least in County, National and specialist libraries. Refer:

[<http://www.brill.nl/default.aspx?partid=210&pid=31176>]